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ABSTRACT

High school principals have been identified as very busy executives in charge of complex organizations. In spite of their lack of time there does appear to be sufficient justification for principals to become involved in growth and development inservice programs if they are to continue to function as effective administrators. This speech describes the activities and procedures of a monthly scheduled and planned inservice program of 12 New York City high school principals from the borough of Queens. An outline of a session on "curriculum" is included. (Author/MLF)

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IN-SERVICE PROGRAMS FOR PRINCIPALS

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IN-SERVICE PROGRAMS FOR PRINCIPALS

High School Principals have been identified as very busy executives in charge of complex organizations. They have been classified by many as leaders in supervision, innovators, directors of instruction, and managers. How, then, can these often over-burdened individuals become involved with in-service programs for themselves? Why should they do this? When does the time become available for principals to meet to review and discuss some of their mutual problems? The question poses a dilemma which may be difficult to resolve, particularly in areas where principals are overwhelmed by problems of student conflict, parental pressures, and community involvement. Nevertheless, there does appear to be sufficient justification for principals to become involved with some kind of growth and development in-service programs if they are to continue to function as effective administrators.

It is probably more feasible for in-service programs for principals to be established in situations where there are large numbers of schools. Principals working in smaller settings may have to be more imaginative and creative in their planning, and organize programs to meet with others in district and county centers, in universities and, perhaps, during vacation periods.

During the past several years, a number of New York City high school principals from the borough of Queens have met regularly, perhaps once a month during the school year, in a scheduled and planned in-service program. This has proved to be one of the more beneficial and challenging experiences for the participants in this area. I should like to describe the activities and the procedures that have emerged in this particular group, using it as a model for further discussion.

The group was organized under the leadership of the Superintendent for the 23 high schools in Queens County in the public school system in New York City. Principals who had been recently appointed, plus those who had been tenured for a number of years, were invited to participate; twelve availed themselves of the opportunity to become involved with this regular workshop. The program was organized by a planning committee consisting of four of the principals, who met with the Superintendent on several occasions to make proposals about the format. This committee then presented its ideas to the larger group. Most of the original proposals were eventually made part of the patterns that were to be a once-a-month presentation by the participants in the group.

THE PLANNING COMMITTEE FUNCTION

When the members of the Planning Committee met, each one had prepared, in advance, a number of suggestions for the format of the meetings to be held. Among the major areas for consideration suggested by the Committee were:

The changing role of the Principal
What conditions affect the role of the high school principal?
How does the principal effect change?
How does the principal work within the community?
How does the principal exert leadership?

Some suggestions that concerned the problems of the new principals, and, perhaps the older principals, also, included:

Where are the priorities?
What is your educational philosophy: Do you have any?
Career education in a traditional high school setting
Leadership: administration or administrivia?
Curriculum innovation and how to implement change
Administration and the school board bureaucracy
Student and parent involvement
Staff and union involvement

Other suggestions included:

Improvement of instruction
Relations with the cabinet

Budgetary considerations
Reorganization of the high school
Plant operation and equipment
Students in their new role in education
Articulation programs
Racial problems and busing
Drug education
Public relations

These were some of the suggestions made by the steering committee. Others would be solicited from the group at future workshop sessions.

It was determined that meetings would consist of a session around the table in a comfortable setting where each of the principals would be involved with a "give and take" situation based on a topic that was selected prior to the meeting. Under the chairmanship of the Superintendent who acted as one of the participating members in the discussion and was, primarily, a resource person, the group would devote itself to the review of a particular topic which one member planned in advance. Meetings were scheduled to run approximately three hours, at least two hours of this time to be spent on the major topic. Although formal minutes would not be maintained, most of the principals kept their own notes which they added to a personal file of supplementary materials distributed at each meeting.

The third hour of the session was to be divided into two parts. One member of the group would make a report on an appropriate topic, possibly a new book that was recently published, perhaps an article of concern to educators, or possibly an issue that was vital and important and in the public interest at the moment. The second part of that final hour was devoted to a "cracker-barrel session" where day-to-day problems and current pressures in administering schools were placed on the table for all to consider.

This was the recommendation of the steering committee which was presented at the meeting of the first group held in October of the school year.

GETTING STARTED WITH THE IN-SERVICE PROGRAM

All meetings of the group of twelve principals were held in one of the high schools, Hillcrest, which was the newest school, and had an attractive conference room, which was comfortable and suitable for a round-table setting. The host principal provided coffee and cake each day that the group met. Meetings were started at 1:00 P.M. and lasted to approximately 4:30 P.M., sometimes later, depending upon the activity and the nature of the discussion. At the first meeting, principals were apprised of the general plans. There was agreement and assignments were made for the subsequent meetings. Mutually acceptable dates were selected so as not to conflict with other problems of the school year.

During the first session, the goals of the in-service program were reviewed by the Superintendent and discussion took place about the needs and concerns of all principals. The proposed topics were debated in terms of priorities, then they were narrowed down for that first school year to several major areas, which were:

Analyzing and assessing supervisory performance of assistant principals
Guidelines for planning new courses
Computer programming - problems and procedures
Improving lunchroom management
Guidance and pupil personnel services
Research and development in high school education
Writing proposals for reimbursable funds
Establishing goals for secondary education
The alienated population
Alternative high schools
Career education
Working with the media and public relations
Parent involvement

A typical session was organized so that the presentor prepared his materials and distributed to each member of the group duplicated outlines and

sometimes in-depth discussion of the topic. Since there was a high level of professionalism in the dialogue and members of the group were anxious to share with one another, the materials that were handed out were, for the most part, very useful, very practical, and very stimulating. After the presentation, the table would be open for general discussion and analysis. Very often, since the topics were known in advance, others would come with supplementary material which would be distributed to the entire group. These sessions proved to be exciting, stimulating, and possibly the most worthwhile professional growth experience that the various members ever had. Because a number of topics suggested procedures and practices that were highly controversial, arguments and discussions became vigorous as each person defended his point of view.

The group represented every range of educational attitude and perception. It included the most conservative principals who were functioning effectively in their schools and others, most liberal, who were involved with schools that were using many new devices and techniques in secondary education. Some schools were traditional in their organization and in their operation. Others were working with computer scheduling on a cyclical basis with open options for youngsters. Many were in between. Some were new schools. Some were old schools. In some, the communities were changing. In others the communities were stable.

Regardless of the type of school and the perceptions of the principal, the information that was shared enriched and broadened the outlook that each member of this group had as he listened and heard from others new ideas and new approaches and new directions for high school leadership.

The Superintendent, who served as a resource person and a moderator,

often summarized the discussions. He was most helpful in providing guidance and his experience was useful in focusing on the major theme.

One particular session devoted to techniques of observing teachers in the classroom was most interesting because each member of the group brought several observation reports to be shared with the others. These were duplicated with the teachers' names struck off. Each principal supplied both positive and negative observations and copies of each were reviewed and analyzed. This was an illuminating experience for many principals who had not had the experience of seeing how other reports were written by various people - the techniques, the style, and the objectives.

REPORTS AND CRACKERBARRELS

It was decided that part of each session would be devoted to a report of either a book, an article, or some area of interest which would require some research by various members of the group. Since Jencks was in the forefront when we started to talk, a number of items were put together concerning Jencks' and Jensen's theories and proposals. Inevitably this lead to other reports which included the writings of Kimeny, Fantini, Hentoff, Postman, Coleman, Brown and other writers very much involved with high schools. Each report was duplicated for the group, and the file of workshop materials began to grow.

The last portion of each session is devoted to discussions of current problems. Although any principal may place a problem on the agenda for review, it was decided that we would attempt, when possible, to consider items of mutual concern. Since many general discussion problems were taken up at other meetings, both borough-wide and city-wide, the areas that were of concern may have involved those that were most appropriate to new schools or new principals. These sessions proved to be helpful; most of the topics revolved around immediate administrative items.

CURRENT STATUS OF THIS IN-SERVICE WORKSHOP

Although the sessions for principals have been held for two years, it has been agreed by all present that these may be the most fruitful, the most helpful, and the most dynamic kinds of workshops that have been established in a large urban school system. Most of the principals attend other meetings of various types. Many are involved with college programs, both as teachers and as learners, however, all agree that these particular sessions are the most challenging and stimulating experiences that they have encountered on a regular, long-time basis.

OTHER FORMS OF IN-SERVICE EDUCATION FOR PRINCIPALS

It is obvious that this workshop approach is not the only method for successful in-service education. The principals may grow and learn and become more effective leaders through many other sources and activities. Among those that have been mentioned as worthy for consideration are:

Attendance at college seminars and graduate programs
Participation as an instructor for new teachers and new administrators at the college level
Participation in local conventions, particularly as a speaker or as a panelist
Presenting papers to parent and community groups and,
Sharing ideas and problems with principals on the elementary and junior high school levels as an effective means of improving articulation.

Each time a principal becomes a presentor at a meeting, or a speaker at a conference, the research with which he must become involved in order to develop his theme and his ideas is a form of in-service education which can be of unusual value. Each time the principal is involved in a discussion with his peers, the knowledge and understandings he acquires is a form of in-service education.

Perhaps one of the most dynamic kinds of in-service education is the Cabinet Meeting which is held with assistants and associates in the school on a regular monthly basis. If these meetings are structured around a central educational or professional theme, and if the agenda is organized by sharing the responsibilities for its preparation with other members of the Cabinet, it is inevitable that there will be growth and development of each participating individual, including the principal. Perhaps one of the better methods of personal training is to learn how others react to the ideas and the approaches and the prodding that is necessary to make the school grow.

No doubt there are other plans that may be considered. Certainly, the striving toward additional professional degrees at the University level is an excellent example of professional growth. Principals are urged to consider their schooling as an enhancement, an enrichment, and an extension of the learning that is necessary on the job. It is urged that all principals move ahead toward the final doctoral degree, which in and of itself may have little personal value other than prestige, but does contribute to the growth and development of the skilled leader.

CONCLUSION

Principals should not be the forgotten man in the educational growth ladder. The necessity for personal development must be synthesized and this may be done through some kind of planned in-service program. If a school-wide system of in-service training for staff members is not available, then principals within a district should develop and organize one which will be for their own mutual benefit. Spending several hours together, preferably in a comfortable setting over coffee and cake, or perhaps luncheon, with a central theme and a major topic is one of the most stimulating

and exciting methods of fostering in-service educational training. The preparation done by the individual can be the beginning of thought and discussion for the entire group.

I have attached the outline of a session on "Curriculum", which was one of the topics to which we devoted time at the Queens Principals' Workshops. It will give you some idea of the breadth and the range of the discussion; the intensity of the debate reflecting varying points of view can be surmised. If such sessions serve as nothing more than a stimulus to thinking in areas of professional responsibility, then the in-service program for principals could prove to be a most successful endeavor.

Attachment

The New Queens High School Principals Seminar

February 22, 1973

CURRICULUM

"A curriculum is a written document which specifies and structures the subject content selected for the education of pupils. It is the basis for teacher planning for individual pupils and groups in local school situations."

Some Topics for Discussion

1. Curriculum directions - relevance in the educational program
2. Changing instructional technology
3. Restructuring the curriculum
4. Alternative education - alternative curriculum?
5. The community and the schools
6. Social foundations and their effect on curriculums
7. Teacher education and the role of colleges on instruction
8. Career education - a new trend in curricular design
9. Articulation; a curriculum progression or problem?
10. Curriculum theory and curriculum practice - incompatible or implementable?

Problems for the School Administrator

1. Curriculum revision demands staff training and reorientation.
2. Parent and community pressures may prevent curriculum change.
3. Curriculum reform does not imply curriculum rearrangement. How does the principal motivate for change and prevent superficiality?
4. There must be a commitment to restructure the program.
5. Continuity of leadership is essential. With the mobility found in school staffs today, how is curriculum revision accomplished?
6. What kinds of research can be done in the school environment?
7. All curriculum revision demands tryout, testing, and evaluation. Who is capable of doing this kind of work?
8. Philosophy and objectives - who is responsible for their development?

Emerging Trends in Curriculum Development

1. More curriculum services are being offered to schools

2. Changes in social institutions and major social problems are being related to the roles of the schools.

3. Attention is being given to clarification of objectives using behaviorial language.

4. Interdisciplinary emphasis in curriculum is growing.

5. Subject matter is being restructured.

6. National curriculum patterns in math, science and social studies are growing.

7. Educational technology and continuous pupil progress curricula are altering elementary and secondary curriculums.

8. Hardware and software marketing is growing; packaging of curricula is a major thrust of publishers.

9. There is an increase (nationally) of staff members assigned to curriculum planning, development, and supervision.

10. Experimental programs approach curriculum planning related to the problems of urban and inner-city schools and communities.

11. Teachers are becoming more specialized; correlated programs are becoming more complex and difficult to administer.

12. An expansion of course offerings at the high school level is creating new demands for different kinds of textbook and resource materials.

13. The concepts of career education (K-16) are emerging as a refocusing of curriculum.

14. The teacher as a member of an organized labor group is requiring more organized materials and more structured curriculums.

15. A reexamination of the secondary school program is creating unprecedented demands for new, valid, relevant curriculum offerings.

Curriculum Development - A Process for Change

The preparation of a curriculum requires a series of specific actions which will eventually result in the completion of a document which may be useful in the implementation of a course or program. None of these steps can be omitted; others not indicated may be required.

1. Identification and analysis of instructional needs
2. Formulation of objectives
3. Preparation of an outline
4. Research - what exists in the literature and in practice
5. Refining materials
6. Integrating media
7. Unit testing and evaluation
8. Preparing pupil and teacher materials, resources, tests, etc.
9. Preparation of a draft document: typing, art, duplication
10. Testing and tryout in selected groups or classes
11. Evaluation. What are the viable alternatives?
12. Revision and preparation of final document

Sources of Curriculum Information and Materials

1. Printed documents: Bureau of Curriculum Development, New York City Board of Education, State Education Department, Albany.
2. Textbook and media publishers
3. Government agencies, community agencies, libraries, universities, business and industry, research reports, school systems, etc.
4. Knowledgable staff, parents, students, other professional and lay persons
5. Professional journals, periodicals, newspapers, scholarly reports (ASCD. Educational Leadership. 1201 16 St. Wash. N.W. 20036)

SOME RANDOMLY SELECTED STATEMENTS ON SCHOOLS AND CURRICULUM IN AMERICA

Many people define a good school not as one with fancy facilities or highly paid teachers, but as one with the right kind of students. Once a "good" school starts taking in "undesirable" students (the definition of desirable being sometimes academic, sometimes social, and sometimes economic), its standing automatically declines.

In America, however, there is not much difference between the formal curriculums of most public schools. Studying the right subjects is largely a matter of being in the right track or curriculum within a given school.

A student's track or curriculum is the single most important determinant of what the school will try to teach him. If anything the school does to a student makes any difference, this should be it. Tracks and curriculums are by definition segregated in terms of academic ability. Thus if school segregation is a denial of equal opportunity, curriculum assignment is susceptible to the same objection.

Neither track nor curriculum assignment seems to have an appreciable effect on student's cognitive development. High school curriculum assignment does, however, have some impact on a student's chances of attending college. This means it has some indirect effect on later occupational status and earnings.

Excluding students from the college curriculum on the basis of their test scores is widely accepted as necessary and legitimate. However, some students with quite low test scores can do the work in a college curriculum, and also in a college. The use of test scores to exclude students from the college curriculum cannot, then, be justified in terms of either necessity or equity. It is merely a matter of bureaucratic convenience and "maintaining standards."

The most obvious alternative to placing students on the basis of test scores, grades, and other similar criteria is to let students place themselves. At the secondary level, substantial numbers of schools have abandoned the whole idea of separate curriculums. They simply offer a variety of courses and allow each student to work out a program to suit his interests and plans. Some students would undoubtedly make the wrong decisions, but then high schools also make a lot of mistakes when they start making decisions for students.

Students who hope to attend college must be told what academic courses they need to take, and encouraged to take them. But if they also want to take vocational courses, that too should be possible. Students who want some kind of job training should be given it, assuming the school can devise training programs of practical value. But if these student also want to take academic courses, they should also be encouraged to do so on the same basis as anyone else.

These reforms are not likely to make students appreciably more equal after they finish school. They would, however, give every student an equal claim on educational resources, desirable classmates, and interesting subject matter while he was in school.

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Jencks, Christopher et al. Inequality A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America. New York: Basic Books, Inc. Publishers, 1972